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E P I S T L E

FROM

OBEREA, QUEEN OF OTAHEITE,

TO

JOSEPH BANKS, Esq.

Translated by T. Q. Z. Esq.

Professor of the OTAHEITE Language in Dublin, and of all the Languages of the
undiscovered Islands in the SOUTH SEA;

And enriched with HISTORICAL and EXPLANATORY NOTES.

L O N D O N.

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E. P. I. S. T. E.

1808

OBSEVA. QUELLO DI CANTINELLA

TO

JOSEPH BARKS, Esq.



London

Presented to the Trustees of the British Museum in 1800, and of the Trustees of the
Museum of Natural History in the year 1800

and entered the Historical and Literary Notices

JOHN D. M.

[1800-1801]

INTRODUCTION.

THE Editor of the following Epistle has only to inform the Publick, that he has translated it with all the Fidelity, which the different Idioms of the two Languages will admit of. He is sensible that it is impossible in English, to convey any Idea of the Beauties of the Otaheite Tongue. It abounds with Diphthongs and Triphthongs, and every Word of it begins with a Vowel. Upon this Account it is infinitely harmonious, to which if we add the Beauty and Sublimity of its Metaphors, we shall only do it Justice if we pronounce it to be one of the noblest Languages, which has ever been spoken since the Confusion of Tongues.

The Editor is in Hopes that this little Specimen will excite the Curious to the Study of it; and he takes this Opportunity of informing them, that he is going to facilitate their Labours by the Publication of a compleat Grammar and Dictionary. This Work will be printed on the same Paper, and with the same Letter as Doctor Hawkesworth's celebrated Voyages, and will be ready to be delivered next Spring for the *moderate* Price of Three
Guineas.

Guineas. It will be highly useful to such Gentlemen, as propose to visit the South Seas, and to make the Grand Tour.*

Dublin, Sept. 20th, 1773. THE Editor of the *Publick*, that he has translated it with

* If the Impression of this Work shall not be sold so soon as the Author flatters himself it will, he engages to publish it in weekly Numbers, at One Shilling each.

possible in English, to convey any Idea of the Sounds of the Orpheus Tongue. It abounds with Triphongs and every Word of it begins with a Vowel. Upon this Account it is infinitely harmonious, to which if we add the Beauty and Sublimity of its Metaphors, we shall only do it Justice if we pronounce it to be one of the noblest Languages, which has ever been spoken since the Creation of Tongues.

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Guineas.

AN EPISTLE, &c.

READ, or oh! say does some more amorous fair

Prevent * *Opano*, and engage his care?

I † *Oberea*, from the Southern main,

Of slighted vows, of injur'd faith complain.

Though now some European maid you woo,

Of ‡ waiste more taper, and of whiter hue;

Yet § oft with me you deign'd the night to pass,

Beneath yon bread-tree on the bending grafs.

NOTES.

* The people of Otaheite could not pronounce Mr. Banks's name, but called him *Opano*.

Perlegis, an conjux prohibet nova, &c.

† *Pegasis Oenone, Phrygiis celeberrima silvis.*

‡ It appears that *Oberea* was rather plump and round, and not of the fairest complexion. See *Hawkesworth's Voyages*.

§ *Sape greges inter requievimus arbore tecti.*

Mistaque cum foliis præbuit herba torum.

Sape super stramen, &c.

Oft in the rocking boat we fondly lay,
Nor fear'd the drizly wind, or briny spray.

* Who led thee through the woods impervious shade,
Pierc'd the thick covert, and explor'd the glade;
Taught thee each plant that sips the morning dew,
And brought the latent minerals to thy view?
Still to those glades, those coverts I repair,
Trace every alley—but thou art not there.

Nor † herb, nor salutary plant I find,
To cool the burning fever of my mind.

Ah! ‡ I remember on the river's side,
Whose babling waters 'twixt the mountains glide,
A bread-tree stands, on which with sharpen'd stone,
To thy dear name I deign'd unite my own.
Grow bread-tree, grow, nor envious hand remove
The sculptur'd symbols of my constant love.

To the vast § main a rock projecting lies,
Where tempests howl, and roaring billows rise.

There

NOTES.

* *Quis tibi monstravit saltus venatibus aptos,
Et tegeret catulos quâ fera rupe suos?*

† *Me miseram! quod amor non est medicabilis herbis,
Deficior prudens artis ab arte meâ.*

‡ *Populus est (memini) fluviali consita ripâ,
Est in quâ nostri littera scripta memor.
Popule vive precor, &c.*

§ The South Sea.

*Aspiciat immensum moles nativa profundum,
Mons fuit, æquoreis illa resistit aquis.
Illic vela tuæ cognovi prima carinæ,
Et mihi per fluctus impetus ire fecit.*

There first at eve thy opening sails I spy'd,
 And eager glow'd to cleave the briny tide.
 My faithful senate sat in wise debate,
 And weigh'd the dubious interests of the state.
 Though some with brandish'd lance for war declare,
 With all the frantic signs of wild despair;
 Yet I more soft to gentle peace inclin'd,
 And sooth'd the terrors of * Tupia's mind.
 Send them, I cry'd, twice twelve delicious dogs,
 And give them cocoas, women, bread, and hogs.

'Twas morn, the gallant vessel steers to land;
 On the moist beach the marshall'd sailors stand.
 Then first the pangs of conscious love I knew,
 My eyes, my longing soul was fixt on you.
 To gain thy love I practis'd every art,
 And gave my kingdom as I gave my heart.
 Alas! what streams of scalding tears I shed,
 When you surpris'd † Obadee in my bed;

From

NOTES.

* Tupia was Prime Minister to Oberea. She consented that he should come to England with Mr. Banks, and thereby gave the strongest proof of her attachment to that gentleman. Unfortunately this great politician and philosopher died on the voyage. *Luclufum hoc fuis; acerbum patriæ; grave bonis omnibus.* Cic.

† On the 29th, not very early in the forenoon, Mr. Banks went to pay his court to Oberea, and was told that she was still asleep under the awning of her boat. Thither he went, and upon looking into her chamber, he found her in bed with a handsome young fellow about twenty-five, whose name was Obadee. *Hawkes. Voyages.*

From * my chaff'd temples strait my locks I twitch,
 And with the prickly shell *tataow* my breech.
 In the soft dance if e'er I chanc'd to move,
 How throb'd thy bosom with impatient love!
 Now slow I sail'd, and stole my easy way
 With sweet, reluctant, amorous delay;
 Then † in brisk circles glanc'd around, and beat
 The measur'd cadence with my quivering feet.
 My eyes refulgent beam'd with wanton fire,
 And all my limbs were brac'd by fierce desire.
 Not Hella's self with all her curious *pas*,
 Her *Rigadoons* and motley *Entre-chas*;
 With such luxuriant grace displays her thigh;
 Or ‡ *Temerédes* with such ease as I.
 Oft on thy lips, those lips of love, I hung,
 To hear thee greet me in my native tongue;
 § *Meetee atira*, sweetly you exprest,
 Your eyes all-eloquent explain'd the rest.

Say

N O T E S.

* *Tum vero rupique sinus, et pectora planxi,
 Et secui madidas ungue rigente genas.*

† *Tunc te plus solita lascivia nostra juvabat,
 Crebraque mobilitas, aptaque verba joco.*

‡ The *Temerédes* is the lascivious dance. See *Hawkesworth's Voyages*.
 I had some difficulty to find out who *Oberea* meant by Hella, but an ingenious friend and critic suggested to me that it must be Mademoiselle Heinel, whose skill and fame we may suppose was highly exaggerated to *Oberea* by *Monf. Bougainville*.

§ *Anglice*, Come here to kiss me—See the *Vocabulary of the Otahite language*, which may serve till my Dictionary is published.

Say fondest youth, canst thou forget the night,
 When starting from your sleep in wild affright;
 Rise *Oberea*, rise my Queen, you said,
 Some * thief has stol'n my breeches from my head.
 Sorrowing † I went beside the billowy main,
 Search'd the long-winding coast, but search'd in vain.
 My choicest garment strait I shar'd with you,
 And fondly cloath'd you with my own ‡ *Perou*.
 Nor strove not other suitors to impart,
 A mutual passion to my royal heart;
 My neck, my jetty eye-brows charm'd § *Teetee*,
 And *Otapairoo* pink'd his bum for me.
 Their tears, their warmest vows could ne'er prevail,
 Nor gift of chequer'd beads, nor proffer'd nail.
 To these fond hands, when first we went to view,
 The magic wonders of thy vast canoe;

C

A

N O T E S.

* Upon their visit to Tootahah, Mr. Banks thought himself fortunate in being placed by *Oberea* in her canoe. She insisted upon taking his cloaths into her custody. Awaking about eleven he found they were stolen, upon which he awakened *Oberea*, who starting up and hearing his complaint, ordered lights, and prepared in great haste to recover what he had lost. In the morning *Oberea* brought him some of her country cloaths.

† *En dōxun wapa hua woluφhoσhoia badavon;*

‡ *Perou* signifies a petticoat in the *Otaheite* tongue,

Eque tuis demptos humeris mihi tradis amictus.

§ *despectus Iarbas*

Duēloresque alii —

A curious * image did *Opano* give,
 Whose eye-balls glisten'd, and which seem'd to live.
 With this I talk beneath the plaintain shade,
 As tho' it heard, and answer'd what I said;
 In amorous dalliance place it on my knee,
 And lavish all the raptures due to thee.

Oft to my eyes the well-known scenes appear,
 Which image all that past when thou wast near.
 Here † *Teropoa*, wretched widow stood,
 And ting'd the ocean with her livid blood:
 Thrice with the shark sharp tooth she pierc'd her head,
 Exclaim'd, ‡ *Tebai*, and in triumph bled:
 There to yon plaintain § *Oorattoa* came;
 And paid just honours to *Opano's* name.

Three

N O T E S.

* I received her (*Oberoa*) with such marks of distinction, as I thought would gratify her most, and was not sparing of my presents, among which this *august Personage* seemed particularly delighted with a child's doll. Vol. II. p. 106.

Illi blanditias, illi tibi debita verba,

Dicimus, amplexus accipit illa meos.

Hanc specio teneoque sinu pro conjuge vero,

Et tanquam possit verba referre, queror.

Crede mihi plus est, quam quod videatur, Imago,

Adde sonum ceræ, Protefilaus erit.

† *Tibora*, *Tumaida's* wife.

‡ An exclamation of grief which signifies, *where is he!* Early in the morning on the 28th, a great number of women came down to the fort, and *Teropoa* being observed among them on the outside of the gate, Mr. Banks went out and brought her in. He saw that the tears stood in her eyes, and as soon as she entered they began to flow in great abundance. He enquired earnestly the cause, but instead of answering, she took from under her garment a shark's tooth, and struck it six or seven times into her head with great force. Vol. II. p. 104.

§ Friday 12th of May was distinguished by a visit from some ladies. Having laid some pieces of cloth on the ground, the foremost of the women, who appeared to be the

Three scarlet robes her tall attendants bore,
 And gently spread them on the winding shore;
 Graceful she mov'd, and with majestic ease,
 Pull'd up her petticoats above her knees;
 Then thrice turn'd round with measur'd steps and flow,
 Proud the curv'd * arches of her bum to shew.
 Here † *Tirabaow-diea* dar'd to prove,
 The impetuous transports of *Toopuab's* love.
 Scarce twelve short years the wanton maid had seen,
 The youth was six foot high, or more I ween.

Experienc'd

NOTES

the principal, and who was called *Oorattoa*, stepped upon them, and taking up her garments all round her to the waist, turned about three times with great composure and deliberation. When this was done she dropped the veil, and stepping off the cloth, three pieces more were laid, and she repeated the ceremony. The three last were laid, and the ceremony was repeated the same manner the third time. Vol. II. p. 125.

* The part on which these ornaments are lavished is the breech; this in both sexes is covered with a deep black, above which arches are drawn one over another. These arches are their pride, and are shewn with great ostentation. *Hawksf. Voyages.*

† A young man near six feet high performed the rites of *Venus* with a little girl about eleven or twelve, before several of our people and a great number of the natives. Among the natives were several women of superior rank, particularly *Oberea*, who may properly be said to have assisted at the ceremony. For they gave instructions to the girl how to perform her part, which young as she was she did not seem much to stand in need of. Vol. II. p. 12.

Blanda truces animos fertur mollesse voluptas,

Constiterant uno scemina, virque loco.

Quid facerent ipsi nullo didicere magistro,

Arte Venus nulla dulces peregit opus.

The translator intended to have suppressed all passages of this nature, which might offend the chaste ear of a British reader. But as Doctor Hawkesworth's very luscious descriptions have been considered rather as sallies of his prurient imagination, than the transactions of real life, he thought it a piece of justice due to that great man to authenticate his narrative.

Experienc'd matrons the young pair survey'd,
 And urg'd to feats of love the self-taught maid;
 With skill superior she perform'd her part,
 And potent nature scorn'd the tricks of art.
 Curst be the envious gales that wafted o'er
 Those floating wigwags to our peaceful shore:
 With specious gifts a crew insidious came,
 And left us * *bitter pledges* of their flame.
 'Till then was nature free and love sincere,
 Nor generous passion quench'd by slavish fear.
 No pining maiden knew the venom'd kiss,
 But all was genuine extacy and bliss.

Oft have I wish'd, for such you love, that I
 Were metamorphos'd to some curious fly;
 Beyond the main I'd speed my eager way,
 And buz around you all the live-long day.
 Nor would I not be some ombrageous tree,
 That shades thy grot, and vegetate for thee;
 At thy approach I'd all my flowers expand,
 And weave my wanton foliage round thy hand.

Think

NOTES.

* I suppose this alludes to the introduction of the venereal disease among them by Monf. Bougainville, which they emphatically call *the Rottenness*. See *Hawkesworth's Voyages*.

†

Α βοη βινσα μελισσα και ες τον αηρον ισηται

THEOC:

* Think not I covet what you riches call,
 Your houses, land, estates—I scorn them all.
 I † crave no jointure of five hundred skins;
 Nor twice as many pounds to buy my pins;
 Nor yet shall I the tardy fates reproach,
 Pant for the lozenge on my lacker'd coach;
 Or waste the produce of your deating will,
 At fordid Loo, or Dowager Quadrilla.
 With you, thrice dear *Opano*, oft I lay,
 Within the wigwam 'till the dawn of day;
 Then from my pack, with anxious care, for you
 Chose the best dog, and stew'd the nice ragout.
 Ah! how I strove thy curious taste to hit,
 From the bak'd viands carv'd the brownest bit;
 To grace thy table spread my finest smocks,
 And pour'd the fragrant ‡ *Monoe* o'er thy locks.
 For thee each morn I cull'd the bread tree's fruit,
 And § with my nostrils blew the dulcet flute.

D

Thrice

N O T E S.

* *Non ego miror opes, nec me tua regia tangit.*

† It is surprising that Oberea should be so well acquainted with the manners of Great Britain; but as she appears to have had such fine parts, we may easily imagine that she did not fail to profit by her frequent conversations with Mr. Banks.

‡ The people of Otaheite have a custom of anointing their heads with what they call *Monoe*, which is an oil expressed from the cocoa nut.

§ It appears that music is cultivated in Otaheite to no small degree of perfection. Indeed this method of blowing the flute with the nostrils is admirably calculated for the *chromatic*.

Thrice happy youth ! what bliss with thine could vie, I think
 To feed on dog's flesh, and with Queens to lie, I think
 * Parting you wept, this truth at least you'll own, I think
 Nor think that weakness, which was once alone, I think
 Stedfast I gaz'd, till from my anchorage I took
 Your lessening canvass gradually withdrew, I think
 Then to my tent I ran in wild despair, I think
 And e'en in dreams renew'd my anxious care, I think
 Whene'er I strove my slumbering eyes to close, I think
 Terrific phantoms, dread illusions rose, I think
 Now o'er the waters I appear'd to float, I think
 And fondly clasp you in the crazy boat, I think
 † Culling choice simples, now I seem'd to go, I think
 O'er barren wastes, a wilderness of woe, I think
 Where'er I turn'd the dread *Morais* appear'd, I think
 And the wild shrieks of frantic grief were heard, I think
 At length you beckon'd, and I leave the shore, I think
 Then tempests 'gan to rage, and winds to roar, I think

The

N O T E S

chromatic. We have heard, with great pleasure, that the ingenious Dr. Burney intends to take a voyage to the South Sea to inform himself, and afterwards to give some account to the public, of the state of music in those parts.

Fleſti diſcordant, hæc ſoltem parce negare

† *gemit ſub pondere cymbæ*

† *Sati—li*

† *ſemper longam incomitata viactur*

† *Tri—vium*

§ The ſepulchres of the people of Otahite are called *Morais*. See *Hawkeſ. Voyages*.

The billowy surges seem'd to lash the skies,
And *Otabeite* vanish'd from my eyes.

Perhaps * *Opano* (be the omen vain)
If ere thy ships shall reach these shores again;
You'll seek the wigwam where we fondly lay,
And in its place will find my sad *Morai*.
Yet think at least my copious † tears you see,
And spare one thought from Botany for me.
And when with curious search thine eyes explore,
The waving forest, or the marshy shore;
When in strong gin thy skilful hands shall steep,
Some unclasp'd fowl or monster of the deep;
Think on the raptures which we once have known,
And waft one sigh to *Otabeite's* throne.

N O T E S.

- *Tempo verrà anchor forse
Ch' al' usato soggiorno
Torni la fera, bella e mansueta;
E là, ov' ella mi scorfe
Nel benedetto giorno,
Volga la vista desiosa e lieta
Cercandomi: e o pietà
Gia terra infra, le pietre
Videndo amor l'inspiri
In guisa che sospiri
Si dolcemente* —

PETRARCA.

† The people of *Otabeite* are remarkable for their *fine feelings*, which generally produce a copious effusion of tears upon every affecting occasion. See *Dr. Hawke's worth passim*.

F I N I S.

The pillow-forges seem'd to let the light

And Obedient vassals from the eyes.

Perhaps "Opium for the common man."

If we say things shall reach their point again,

You'll feel the wigwag when we lobby in.

And in its place will stand my old friend

Yes think at least my copious

And four one thought from me.



And when within certain limits

The waving forest, or the many-colored

When is strong in the field of the

...and to the ...

Thief on the rapine with the following known

And wait one night to Obed's throne.

1. The first part of the book is a general introduction to the study of the history of the world, from the beginning of time to the present day. It covers the major events and figures of world history, and discusses the different theories of the origin of the world and of the development of human civilization.

† The people of Guatemala are responsible for their own actions, which generally produce a vicious circle of ever-worsening conditions. In the future...

